

Operating Principles

Food Policy Council of Buffalo & Erie County

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The Food Policy Council of Buffalo & Erie County strives to build and strengthen a sustainable and just regional food system through policy recommendations, awareness, education and advocacy.

Contents

Purpose and Duties	2
Definition.....	2
Goals of the FPC of Buffalo & Erie County	2
Staff Support Person (FPC Coordinator).....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Responsibilities.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Membership.....	3
Appointment to the FPC.....	3
Membership Composition	3
Appointed Seats	3
Stakeholder Seats.....	3
Terms of Appointment	4
Appointed Seats	4
Stakeholder Seats.....	4
Expectations of Members	4
FPC Code of Conduct	4
Officers.....	5
Council Officers	5
Standing Committee Chairs.....	6
Committees/Working Groups	6
Standing Committees	6
Working Groups.....	7
Policy Proposals.....	8
Meetings	8
Contact Information.....	9
FPC Chair.....	9
Erie County Department of Health Representative.....	9

Purpose and Duties

Definition:

The Food Policy Council of Buffalo & Erie County (FPC) is an advisory council that provides local governments, as well as residents, information and advice about various policies and programs that support community-based food systems.

A community-based food system emphasizes, strengthens and makes visible the relationships among producers, processors, distributors and consumers of food at the local level.

The economic benefits of a well-functioning community-based food system include an increase in direct marketing partnerships between producer and consumer, urban and rural economic growth, and an increasing number of dollars that remain through locally produced products.

In addition, the FPC can also address issues of food security, land-use, access to healthy, fresh, affordable food, procurement of locally produced food; barriers in permitting and licensing that discourage access to and development of healthy, fresh, affordable food retail.

Mission Statement:

The Mission of the FPC is to advocate for an equitable and sustainable food system for the people of Buffalo and Erie County.

Vision Statement:

A healthy local food system that works for all people.

Goals of the FPC of Buffalo & Erie County:

1. To lead the effort in creating a more equitable and sustainable food system.
2. To promote activities to strengthen the local food system including food production (farming), food processing, food wholesale, food distribution, food retail, and food disposal.
3. To review and comment upon laws, policies, and plans to ensure that they strengthen the local food system which creates a mechanism for bringing the voice of Buffalo and Erie County's food system stakeholders to the local government.
4. To collaborate in the exploration of new, innovative solutions to improve the local food system.
5. To make proposals and recommendations to local government officials on existing and new policies.
6. To support activities that educate and inform the local public about the local food system.
7. To promote activities that ensure that consumers in Buffalo and Erie County have access to healthful and affordable food.
8. To advise on activities that ensure that various local government entities work in a coordinated fashion to support the local food system.
9. To educate and inform schools, parents and students about the local food system and benefits of incorporating healthy food into school meals.

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10. With assistance from the City of Buffalo and Erie County, to periodically assess the state of the local food system and outline a course of action for improving the food system

Membership

The FPC will be composed of 15-20 members.

Appointment to the FPC:

Appointment to the FPC will consist of a hybrid model of appointed seats which represent government, municipal agencies and stakeholder seats which represent all sectors of the food system selected through an open application process.

Membership Composition:

1. The FPC will include a combination of appointed seats and stakeholder seats, with 65% of the membership made up of the stakeholder seats listed below.
2. Best efforts will be made to ensure that at least one individual from all of the listed seats will be represented.

Appointed Seats:

- Erie County Department of Environment and Planning
- Erie County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board
- Erie County Department of Health
- City of Buffalo (i.e. Municipal representatives)
- Food Assistance (i.e. Social services (SNAP), WIC)
- Erie County Board of Health
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County

Stakeholder Seats:

- Farmers (urban/rural, producers of diverse products)
- Processors
- Distributors/Wholesalers
- Retailers (small/large, direct-to-consumer)
- Consumer
 - o Youth
 - o Senior
 - o Low food access
 - o Urban
 - o Rural
 - o Migrant workers
- Waste
- Emergency Food (i.e. Feedmore WNY)
- Institutional representatives (i.e. Schools, Prisons, Daycare Centers, Nursing Homes)
- Academic Researcher – defined as an individual with advanced training and experience in the study and practice of local and regional food systems planning or policy. The individual must be formally affiliated with a local institute of higher learning such as a university, college

or research institution in the capacity of a faculty member or researcher with a focus on food policy or research related to the food system.

- Other – Anyone who works in a food related capacity (ex. entrepreneur, culinary, financier, dietician, etc.)

Terms of Appointment

Appointed Seats

1. Appointed terms will be unlimited due to the nature of the appointment and the positions held. These will be standing seats and will ensure the continuity of the Council. Should an appointed seat be vacant, it is the responsibility of the organization and/or board to notify the Council Chair when a new representative will be filling a vacancy.

Stakeholder Seats

1. Stakeholder terms will be limited to three years, with the option to reapply at the end of the term if desired by submitting a written letter to the Recruitment Committee. Stakeholders can serve two consecutive terms with the option to reapply but must take a one-year break before reapplying through the standard application process.

Expectations of Members

1. Members are expected to attend all full Council meetings, and all standing committee/working group meetings that they are part of.
 - a. If a member has missed 6 out of the last 12 full Council meetings, then the full Council will vote on whether or not the member will retain their seat.
 - b. If a member needs to be excused from a meeting, they need to notify the FPC Chair/Committee Chair/Working Group Chair 24 hours in advance. If they do not provide such notice, they will be noted as absent.
2. Attendance will be taken at each meeting.
3. Members will be appointed to serve on one standing committee that aligns with their expertise and skills. A member may elect to serve on one or more standing committees, but no more than two. Service on a standing committee should begin no later than the start of their second year of a three-year term.
4. Members are expected to serve on at least one working group during each term served. Service on a working group should begin no later than the start of their second year of a three-year term.
5. Members are expected to complete all action items set forth in the time frame allotted.
6. A member who seeks to resign from the Council shall submit a written resignation to the Chair of the Council. If possible, the resignation should allow for a 30-day notice.

FPC Code of Conduct

1. FPC members will carry out their responsibilities to the exclusion of any personal advantage.
 - a. All FPC members will submit a completed Conflict of Interest Policy to the Recording Secretary within the first two months of joining the FPC.

2. FPC members should avoid any situation involving conflict, or the appearance of a conflict, between their personal interests and the performance of their FPC duties. If such a conflict arises, members should promptly withdraw from participation in decision-making connected with the matter. If the conflict is potential rather than actual, FPC members should seek legal or ethics advice about whether they should recuse themselves from the situation that is creating the conflict or the appearance of a conflict.
3. FPC members should refrain from making public statements or accepting media requests on behalf of the FPC.
 - a. Such requests should be funneled through the FPC spokesperson (Council Chair) who will maintain a consistent, controlled message when making public statements or speaking to the media.
4. FPC respects cultural and individual differences, and believe discrimination should not be tolerated. FPC members are expected to maintain a discrimination-free space. All members must be treated with dignity. FPC members must not engage in, condone, or tolerate physical, verbal mental or sexual harassment against or among other members.

Officers

Council Officers

1. Council officers include:
 - a. **Chair:** The Chair will preside over and impartially direct all meetings of the FPC in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order. The Chair will remain an unbiased representative of the Council and will not have voting privileges except in the event of tie vote. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that all functions and responsibilities of the FPC are carried out. Essentially, the Chair will serve as the public face of the Council. The Chair is required to sign all letters, reports and other communications required to be signed by a member of the FPC.
 - i. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that in their absence the Vice Chair is able to perform their duties. If the Vice Chair is unable to serve in this capacity, it is the Chair's responsibility to appoint another council member or staff support person.
 - b. **Vice Chair:** In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair will perform all the above duties.
 - c. **Recording Secretary:** The Recording Secretary will take meeting minutes (must include attendance, explanation of action items, record votes on all action items) and receive documents (i.e. request of support, letters, presentation materials, working group reports) submitted to the Council during meetings. From said attendance records, the Recording Secretary will determine voting eligibility in accordance with the Operating Procedure manual of the Council and will provide a voting roster in the Secretary's report to be given at each meeting. Recording Secretary will also manage letters of support.
 - d. **Correspondence Secretary:** In the absence of the Recording Secretary, the Corresponding Secretary will perform the above duties. The Correspondence

Secretary will organize meeting dates and locations, and work with the Executive Committee to develop a meeting agenda. The Corresponding Secretary will manage the Council's email listserv, website and/or social media presence. She/he will ensure that public notice is given for full Council meetings.

- e. **Treasurer:** The Treasurer is responsible for overseeing the distribution of grant funds and provide financial oversight for the council by approving and signing all spending requests. The FPC Chair will act as a secondary signatory on all spending requests.
2. Officers will be elected every 24 months by a majority vote of the FPC at the first regular meeting before January 1st or June 30th.
3. The term of office shall be 24 months, beginning January 1st or July 1st and ending June 30th or December 31st. An officer may continue to serve until a successor is elected. A person may not serve as a council officer for more than two consecutive terms.

Standing Committee Chairs

1. Each committee will have a chair.
 - a. The chair will preside over standing committee meetings and represent the committee at Council meetings. The committee chair will be responsible for facilitating communication between meetings with the other members of the committee. In addition, the chair will be responsible for completing each committee's charter and sharing any other potentially applicable website/social media content.
2. Committee chairs will be selected every 24 months by majority vote of the FPC standing committee at the first regular meeting before January 1st or June 30th.
3. The term of office shall be 24 months, beginning January 1st or July 1st and ending June 30th or December 31st. A chair may continue to serve until a successor is elected. A person may not serve as chair of a standing committee for more than two consecutive terms.

Committees/Working Groups

Standing Committees

1. Standing Committees will be composed of only FPC members.
2. New members will be assigned to a Standing Committee that is best aligned with their skills and expertise.
 - a. Members are assigned rather than self-selected because each committee needs to have individuals that are experts in that particular area. What the committee brings to the Council is thus the sound judgment of experts in the field.
3. The structure of the standing committees will be evaluated every three years and the Council, using Robert's Rules of Order, has the ability to dissolve or create committees.
4. Standing Committees will develop and finalize recommendations using the consensus-1 model.
 - a. Final recommendations of the Standing Committee will be brought to the Council for a vote to accept or send back to committee.

Committee	Role
Executive	Consist of the Officers of the FPC and are accountable for setting direction and managing the operations of the FPC
Governance	Accountable for establishing bylaws and operational guidance
Outreach	Accountable for building strategic relationships with other organizations and efforts in the community
Recruitment	Accountable for recruiting members to the FPC and the Working Groups
Food Action Plan (FAP)	Oversee the implementation of the FAP objectives and serve as the liaison with the FAP Working Group

Table 1. Current Standing Committees

Working Groups

- Working Groups will be specific to an issue. Initial Working Groups have been identified in the FAP and Strategic Plan as noted below.
- In order to establish a new working group – a member of the FPC will research a specific policy/topic/subject area and then bring the research back to the Council to look at through the lenses of the food system sectors.
- Working Groups will dissolve when no longer needed.
- Working Groups can include members from the community at large who are recognized experts on the policy/topic/subject of interest.
 - A proposal of community members to serve on the Working Group will be brought to the Council for approval. The proposal will include the names and credentials of the community members.
- A council member will be assigned, by the FPC Chair, to act as a liaison between the Working Group and the Council. The liaison will be responsible for:
 - Submitting charters on the working group's progress to the FPC Recording Secretary, at a minimum of one week prior to a Council meeting.
 - Taking and submitting attendance reports to the FPC Recording Secretary.
 - Submitting potentially applicable website and social media content to the Corresponding Secretary for review.
- Working Groups will develop and finalize recommendations using the consensus-1 model.
 - Final recommendations of the working group will be brought to the Council for a vote to accept or to send back to the working group.

The following lists six Priority Areas of the Food Action Plan (2020). As noted in the Strategic Plan, each Priority Area shall have a Working Group which will report to the FPC:

- Agriculture
- Economic Development
- Education

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- Environment and Climate Change
 - Food Access
 - Health

Policy Proposals

1. Any member or group of members seeking Council support on a policy or an issue, before bringing it to the Council, must first:
 - a. Be able to clearly demonstrate/explain the policy or issue and how it relates to FPC goals and objectives.
 - b. Research how the issue has been addressed in similar locations and at other FPCs (if it has).
 - c. Send a written policy explanation, research findings and draft policy proposal to the Full Council membership at least one week prior the Full Council meeting (this will give members sufficient time to review the information, prepare comments and questions (this can be done via email)).
2. After the first presentation the Council will then choose to:
 - a. To support/not support the issue.
 - b. Request further information, thus tabling the issue until said information is provided.
 - c. Decide if this policy/information should be brought to the attention of the Erie County Board of Health before moving forward.
3. If the Council votes to support the issue/policy the proposing member(s) will work to finalize a policy proposal based on feedback. They will make sure that the final proposal is placed on the next meeting agenda; and they will provide a copy of the final proposal to all members one week prior to the next Council meeting.
4. Present final policy proposal as recommendation to FPC for approval.
5. Present final policy proposal to Erie County Board of Health for informational purposes.
 - a. In the event that the Board of Health has reservations or requests more information, the FPC member or group of members will address the concerns and provide the additional information per the board's request.
6. Once approved, determine as a Council when and how best to roll it out to the appropriate decision makers.

Meetings

1. Meetings of the Council will be held monthly (excluding the month of November for recess).
 - a. Members must have been present for two out of the last three meetings of the Council to vote on an action item.
2. Standing Committees will meet at least bi-monthly, or as often as needed to complete task. Communication between Council meetings will be facilitated by the committee chair.
3. Working Groups will meet as often as needed to complete task.
4. All Council meetings will follow Robert's Rules of Order.

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5. No action item can be put to a vote without a quorum present. A quorum is defined as the majority of the voting membership.
 - a. A quorum of the voting membership is for action items at Council meetings only.
 - b. Standing committees and working groups will come to a consensus-1 on recommendations and will then bring recommendations to the Council for a vote. The Council can either accept or send back to committee/working group.
 6. In accordance with the Meetings Law, all Full Council meetings will be open to the public.
 - a. Pursuant to this law, meeting dates will be posted no later than one week prior to each FPC meeting.

Contact Information

FPC Chair

Allison DeHonney
Urban Fruits & Veggies / Customer Advocate

Erie County Department of Health Representative

Julia Gruspier
Erie County Department of Health: Community Wellness